

**Concept Note**  
**UP-SCALE: Building Skills, Capacity, and Learning for Civil Society**  
**Concept Note UP-SCALE**

**Summary: What is the added value of UP-SCALE?**

- **A growing space to reach excellency:** Unlike other platforms, the initiative builds on the ACCESS Coalition -the biggest global CSO energy network- and on its members' local expertise and current demand.
- **Sharing / training best practices:** A sharing space responding to CSOs knowledge demand, covering a wide range of advocacy/implementing energy topics and enhancing the quality of the work of these and -indirectly- other stakeholders.
- **Improving coordination and collaboration:** Partnering up with complementary organisations and network across sometimes overlapping geographies ensures best use of scarce financing, improves outcomes and increases the legitimacy of the players.
- **Expert technical service facility:** Providing timely, specific and high quality technical assistance support to enhance implementation/advocacy actions or strategies when and where they are most needed.
- **Broadening learning outside CSO space:** giving the members a convening role where others outside the CSO world can be invited (SMEs, donors, governments, investors, etc.) to challenge visions, exchange and learn from others and to ensure that citizen participate who know the local opportunities and challenges best.
- **Knowledge gap closer:** Drawing from existing ACCESS members' and others' knowledge, the initiative will be credited by identifying knowledge gaps and building or identifying evidences through joint-collaboration.

**Introduction of the UP-SCALE initiative**

The UP-SCALE initiative aims to expand the ACCESS coalition's efforts of creating a global solid, cohesive and influencing voice of the Civil Society Organizations or CSOs (social entrepreneurs, NGOs/CBOs and research institutions) in the energy access space. The ACCESS goals would benefit from an innovative market-place driven knowledge sharing mechanism which underpins the dissemination of best practices and the delivery of crucial technical support to the member organizations and others. This would ultimately increase the impact of global and local stakeholders operating in the energy access space.

**What is UP-SCALE?**

- The **knowledge arm of the ACCESS Coalition**, a 4-year old network composed by 65 CSOs and practitioners with decades of expertise in energy access.
- A functional space to **share best practices**, including what works and what doesn't, strengthening ACCESS members' –and non-members- skills and capacities.
- A highly collaborative knowledge aggregator of expert advice, matching knowledge demand and supply with **reliable and timely technical support** delivery in implementation and advocacy, increasing impact and resource efficiency.
- A **pool of experts from global North & South entities** covering a wide range of energy-related technical topics.
- A solution to accelerate the delivery of **SDG7 as a mean to enhance the pace of achieving other SDGs** (e.g. poverty alleviation, health, education, livelihoods, women's empowerment, climate change mitigation).

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#### Rationale of UP-SCALE

Over the recent years, and following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the creation of SDG 7, global attention and action on energy access have radically scaled up, and civil society interest has correspondingly evolved as well. This is primarily due to increased recognition of the links between clean energy access, social justice, development and environment sustainability including climate change, but also due to existing limitations of traditional aid/charity models.

While these links to economic growth and social development are increasingly well recognised, there is potential for CSOs to improve how they integrate energy access into other developmental initiatives and outcomes and ensuring citizen-centred energy access delivery.

There is a real urgency to articulate credible **guidance, specific support and tailored knowledge on proven methodologies and approaches** on how CSOs would fulfil more effectively their role to help reaching SDG7. Although CSOs are generally considered playing a positive role in the energy space – e.g. have real cross-sectorial knowledge and community engagement experience – some barriers have impeded CSOs reaching bigger impact towards achieving SDG7 such as:

1. Lack of sufficient coordination between CSOs working on energy access – especially in the South - and other stakeholders (e.g. private sector), which hampers opportunities to find complementary and impactful collaborations,
2. Low rate of uptake & integration of existing energy access best practices which are shared across fragmented and usually inaccessible knowledge spaces (specially for Southern CSOs), often ending up in duplication of efforts, replicating failures and reliance on obsolete information and
3. A traditionally piece-meal approach which has impeded framing a common global vision and direction around how to reach scale across CSOs operating in energy access.

In order to respond to the urgent need to mobilize the skills and capacities from CSOs with the view to increase ultimately their impacts in achieving SDG7, a Learning Group of northern and southern like-minded ACCESS members created UP-SCALE.

UP-SCALE is better defined as a joint-effort from front-runner CSOs that believe:

1. CSOs can beat the "business as usual" approach and create impactful, complementary and multi-sectorial collaborations with existing - or new actors entering the energy access space;
2. More prominent engagement of civil society in relevant sharing knowledge and advocacy spaces in order to make sure social and environmental justice elements are key, but ramping up joint-investment in capacity and skill building and better tailored rules of engagement to enable bigger (southern) CSOs participation in those spaces must change;
3. A common evidence-based research design and dissemination pertinent and across CSOs will help establish joint-positions and help guide CSOs in their strategic decisions and in delivering their actions and efforts.

#### Proposed Actions by UP-SCALE

Building on this rationale, UP-SCALE proposes to leverage on the available expertise and the knowledge demand from ACCESS Coalition members (and beyond), gathering most relevant practical **global & local data/information**, boosting **South-South cooperation and collaboration** and knowledge **sharing** and providing **specific expertise, strategic guidance and more suitable knowledge spaces** for CSOs to ultimately help increasing impact on the ground across Latin America, Africa and South and South East Asia.

This will ultimately lead to a **much-needed increased pool of capable delivery CSOs for the energy access community**, which will increase opportunities to establish **new partnerships**, create and

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expand existing **skills and capabilities** and enable more effective and increased **impact** in delivery energy access services to last mile communities.

For doing this, UP-SCALE proposes the following key interventions:

**1. Research: Identify and address current evidence gaps-** Evidence-based research and strategic guiding briefs produced by UP-SCALE are a collective & cost-efficient pathway to enable CSOs delivering on SDG7;

**2. Knowledge brokering Facility: Good practices and knowledge sharing** – a knowledge Brokering Facility, including a central knowledge and learning "One-Stop-Shop" with updated best practices, disseminated research and a tailored set of learning opportunities for CSOs operating or planning to enter into the energy access space;

**3. Partnership building: Stimulating strategic alliances to engage non-energy CSOs** -Stimulating innovative and multi-sectoral partnerships among energy CSOs and between energy and non-energy CSOs.

## Theory of Change

UP-SCALE: ACCESS Coalition Learning Group - Theory of Change						
Target (Desired Situation)	Impact and scale in delivering SDG7 increased by the transformative role played by CSOs					
Outputs / Results	New and impactful partnerships delivering on SDG7 and other SDGs through complementary skills and capacities	CSOs integrate best practices and improve their energy access skills to influence and transform the current energy poverty context	ACCESS Learning Group becomes a common & trustful space for CSOs to meet and share joint strategic intends, efforts and directions and integrate guidance produced		Research and evidence products disseminated, up taken and used by CSOs and other relevant stakeholders	
Key Interventions by UP-SCALE	Stimulating innovative and multi-sectoral partnerships between energy (and non-energy) CSOs and beyond	UP-SCALE equips ACCESS Coalition with a Knowledge Brokering Facility, including a central knowledge and learning "One-Stop-Shop" with updated best practices, research and a tailored set of learning opportunities for CSOs operating or planning to enter into the energy access space			Evidence-based research and strategic guiding briefs produced by UP-SCALE are a collective & cost-efficient pathway to enable CSOs delivering on SDG7	
Barriers	Match-making processes, cross-learning and stimulating partnership methodologies sound unconvincing and expensive, hence insufficiently explored among CSOs in the energy access space	Duplicating efforts, replicating failures & reliance on obsolete information still happening across CSOs	Knowledge spaces are fragmented and usually accessible for just a handful of international CSOs already engaged in energy access	Internal capacity building is expensive and usually unreachable especially for Southern CSOs	Existing evidence-based research gaps preventing CSOs from increasing further impact and steering direction	Impact generating-research requires a broad base of skills, high analytic capacities and financial resources
Assumptions	CSOs beat the "business as usual" approach and forge impactful complementary and multi-sectorial collaborations	CSOs engage more prominently in international, regional and national sharing knowledge spaces		CSOs ramp-up their internal investments in enhancing and broadening their skills base		Evidence-based research and position briefs developed to help guiding CSOs in their strategic decisions and delivering their actions and efforts
Root Causes	Lack of sufficient level of coordination & collaboration between CSOs and other relevant stakeholders		Low uptake & integration of energy access knowledge and skills in CSOs' efforts to deliver SDG7		CSOs space in energy access is dispersed, lacking a common vision and direction to achieve impact	
Assumptions	CSOs can play a critical role in contributing to achieve SDG7 by 2030					
Problem (Existing Situation)	Not enough progress to achieve SDG7 by 2030					

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## **Key Activities**

### **1. Research: Identify and address current evidence gaps**

Joint-efforts by leading research institutes like the Wuppertal Institute and the IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development) will be dedicated to identify and cover existing data and evidence gaps where they relate to the role of CSOs and civil society in general in the achievement of energy access goals. Under this work package, the UPSCALE initiative will dig into existing ACCESS members' research agendas, trends and topics of interest for the global and regional discussions. This way, and through aggregating efforts and systematization of existing data and evidence among ACCESS members and beyond, UPSCALE will become a credible one-stop-shop with evidence and information contributing to boost the role of CSOs in the sector.

**Evidence-gap closer** Identification of relevant evidence and data gaps and establishment of working groups to deliver **several pieces of research**.

- Review of knowledge of how CSOs contribute to reaching SDG7.
- Review/case studies where CSOs/local practitioners have been engaged in multi-stakeholder dialogues on energy access.
- Evidence on results of South-South approach to capacity development in energy access space
- Develop a simple structured Theory of Change to showcase evidence that can easily be adapted by the CSOs for their collection of evidence.

### **2. Knowledge brokering Facility: share good practices**

Relevant, innovative and ground-breaking practices on selected topics within the ACCESS Coalition members' and beyond will be selected and shared in order to increase the learning of the CSOs and other stakeholders operating in the energy access space. Counting on expert players in the Coalition ensures immediate access to a big pool of proven best practices and a cost-effective way of mobilizing internal knowledge resources. UPSCALE will broker knowledge among energy? CSOs ; but also with non-energy CSOs or networks (e.g. LCEDN, Nethope, Biolab or End Water Poverty) with an interest in providing positive challenge and improve CSOs' current work on the energy access space.

- **Needs assessment in collaboration with ACCESS regional nodes** for selection of high-priority topics for different groups of CSOs (local and international CSOs will have common, but might also have different knowledge needs).
- **Documentation** what is already existing (material/literature/webinar review for key topics) – on energypedia ([Knowledge portals](#))
- **Face-to-face meetings (back-to-back to ACCESS Coalition regional events in Eastern/Western/Southern Africa)** would be utilized to broaden the sharing and dissemination processes through ACCESS members and beyond.
- Explore other Peer to peer exchange possibilities among CSOs
- **Best practices sharing**; At least 4 smart-webinar<sup>1</sup>for, and conveyed by, CSOs, primarily the ACCESS members but also other stakeholders and networks. Initial topics would be informed by the needs assessment and might include: *Productive Uses of Energy*; *Digital Technology in Energy Access*; *Partnering with the Private Sector*; and *Participatory Planning and Financing under decentralized contexts*. Gradually a demand-driven process should lead topic generation.
- **Coordination and set up of a quality validation mechanism** via gate-keepers for each one of the selected energy access topics. (This can be easily done via the existing community of practice [www.energypedia.info](http://www.energypedia.info).)
- **CSOs strategic papers**; Quarterly briefs including showcasing CSOs good practices in the sector, evidences and a general stock take from specific topics. These papers should provide guidance CSOs on needed topics.

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<sup>1</sup> Smart-webinars are designed with e-learning elements that allow UP-SCALE to assess knowledge demand from the Coalition members and include elements to help guiding CSOs.

### 3. Partnership building: Stimulating strategic alliances to engage non-energy CSOs

UP-SCALE has identified a multitude of different non-energy CSOs interested to enter the energy access space and with high potential to accelerate the energy landscape and bring some of the best practices to scale. Faith-based CSOs, humanitarian institutions or agri-business sustainability standards and accreditation bodies have shown their interest to access the complex energy space. However, they don't have the capacity or skills to do so and need additional support to ramp up their engagement and increase their impact.

UP-SCALE will test an innovative alliance forging framework based on stimulating the engagement of non-energy expert CSOs to join ACCESS and to team up with existing ACCESS expert energy organizations under a range of different topics, hence establishing ground-breaking partnerships that deliver at bigger scale:

- **Innovation Facility Workshops:** UP-SCALE will utilize innovative tools to stimulate effective teaming up between different groups of non-energy entities to interact with ACCESS members.

### Outcomes of the initiative

1. New and impactful partnerships delivering on SDG7 and other SDGs through complementary skills and capacities
    - a. Enhanced collaboration and coordination among CSOs, therefore increasing their capacity and credibility to effectively respond to the current energy access knowledge and strategic challenges.
    - b. Enhanced collaboration and diverse partnerships among CSOs and with other stakeholders on a global level.
  2. CSOs integrate best practices and improve their energy access skills to influence and transform the current energy poverty context
    - a. Increased contribution of CSOs in implementation: especially in energy poverty communities including the poorest and most marginalized ones.
  3. UP-SCALE becomes a common & trustful space for CSOs to meet and share joint strategic intends, efforts and directions and integrate guidance produced
    - a. Increased contribution of CSOs in advocacy: Giving CSOs a stronger voice in the international energy access and sustainability agenda.
  4. Research and evidence products disseminated, uptaken and used by CSOs and other relevant stakeholders
- Ultimate impact of these outcomes: meet global energy access goals.